



# 150 Years of Chinese Students in America<sup>1</sup>

T. K. Chu

*In 2002, about 65,000 Chinese students were enrolled in universities in America, and Chinese students accounted for the highest percentage of international students on many American campuses. Before the exchange in 1979, China had not sent its students for thirty years.*

## Part I. The Intermittent History

On January 1, 1979, the United States and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations. The event occurred three decades after the founding of the People's Republic and seven years after President Richard Nixon visited China. Five days before the diplomatic exchange, fifty Chinese students arrived in America to begin their studies. By 2003, more than 580,000 Chinese students had gone abroad to study, the majority of them to America.<sup>2</sup> In 2002, about 65,000 Chinese students were enrolled in universities in America,<sup>3</sup> and Chinese students accounted for the highest percentage of international students on many American campuses. Before 1979, the United States maintained its diplomatic relations with the Republic of China in Taiwan and China had not sent its students to America for thirty years.

The negotiation between the United States and China on sending and accepting students took place during a three-day meeting that began on July 7, 1978, in Beijing. Frank Press, President Carter's Advisor on Science and Technology, led the fourteen-person American delegation and Fang Yi, chairman of China's Science and Technology Committee, headed the Chinese delegation. The negotiation was on the exchange of scientific and technological information. Although the Americans did not come prepared with a program on the exchange of students, they floated the idea to the Chinese. To their surprise, the Chinese readily embraced it. They asked how many students the Americans could accept. The American delegation held an impromptu internal meeting and returned to ask the Chinese,

"How many would you like to send?"

"How about 500?" the Chinese immediately answered.

Later negotiations settled the number in the first dispatch at fifty. Thus Frank Press returned to America with the breakthrough news that China was ready to open up.

On December 16, 1978, the two countries announced that they would establish diplomatic relations, and Deng Xiaoping, Secretary General of the Chinese Communist Party, who in 1920 at the age of fifteen went to France for five years under the “diligent-work, diligent-study” program before he headed for Moscow, would visit the United States on January 29, 1979. Two days later the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party convened in Beijing and endorsed China's policy of reform and opening up. On December 26, 1978, the first dispatch of fifty Chinese, mostly physicists and mathematicians, boarded a plane for Paris, where they changed planes for the U.S. They studied English at Georgetown University and American University before taking up their two-year studies at institutions around the country.

China's decision to open up came nearly thirty years after Chairman Mao Zedong declared, on October 1, 1949, the founding of the People's Republic of China in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. He proclaimed that founding with a single sentence that was understood by all the Chinese, “From now on the Chinese people have stood up!” But in the three decades that followed, the country had become isolated — by its policy of self-reliance, by the American embargo on trade with China triggered by the Korean War (1950-1953) and the caustic and intimidating politics of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and by the Sino-Soviet rift that began in the late 1950s. The isolation limited China's development and aggravated its poverty. The venting of frustration over economic hardship and its suppression by the Chinese Communist Party plunged the country into successive convulsive socio-economic movements.<sup>4</sup> The movements wrecked the existing economic structure. Their public display of cheering, vengeance, and hatred ripped apart human bonds. The final movement, the Cultural Revolution, began in 1966, evolved into Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius Campaign, and ended shortly after Mao Zedong's death in 1976. It targeted intellectuals: they were sent to work in communes and factories; schools and colleges were closed; and students were enlisted as the vanguards of the movement, the Red Guards. When China decided to send *students* to America to study two years after Mao's death, it had only *scholars* of an older generation to fill the first dispatch: the youngest was thirty-two, the oldest forty-nine, and

the mean age was forty-one.

But in China's turbulent, anguished and contentious path of searching for its modern self since the mid-nineteenth century, the 1978 decision to send students to America was the third start of such a policy. Each previous start was also preceded by decades of turmoil stemmed from the country's inability to address the problem of poverty at home and to remain secluded securely from the encroaching religious, trade and military power of the West, Russia, and Japan.

### **The First Dispatch, 1872**

In 1872, the year when the Qing court sent its first dispatch of thirty teenage students to America, China had been left behind by the Industrial Revolution for more than a century.<sup>5</sup> Its population had been increasing, its economy had become entrenched progressively deeper in agriculture, and the Chinese had become steadily poorer. China's per capita cultivated land, and hence real wages, had declined slowly since the twelfth century and more rapidly since the mid-seventeenth century. Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, China's population, though increasing slowly, had remained for the most part under 100 million. But by mid-nineteenth century the population had exceeded 400 million and the per capita cultivated land had decreased from about 1.3 to 0.45 acre.<sup>6</sup> [A more recent study indicates that the accelerated pressure on land may have begun in the early Ming dynasty (1368-1644).<sup>7</sup> In 1982, when China's population reached 1 billion, its per capita cultivated land was 0.25 acre, compared to 2.1 acre for the United States.] The percentage of China's urban population had decreased from 21 percent of the total in 1220 to 6.9 percent in 1820.<sup>8</sup> From 1500 to 1800, the life expectancy of those Chinese who had already reached the age of fourteen had decreased from about sixty-two to about forty-eight.<sup>9</sup> For millennia, China's political and social system had used hierarchical human relations emphasizing benevolence and loyalty to promote social harmony:<sup>10</sup> benevolence was expected from superiors, and loyalty was demanded from subordinates. The institutionalized Confucianism offered no practical means, except execution, for the removal of a ruler or his power when he had “outraged his proper benevolence.”<sup>11</sup>

China did not know the outside world, either. In 1901, viceroys Zhang Zhidong and Liu Kunyi wrote to Emperor Guangxu about the government officials who supported the Boxer rioters the year before: “Even last summer there were still some

officials, both in and outside the capital, who claimed that the ocean people [Westerners] could not walk on land, and others who claimed that once the embassies and churches were destroyed, the ocean people would be eliminated.”<sup>12</sup>

But it was China’s defeats by Great Britain in the Opium War (1839-1842), and by Britain and France in the Second Opium War (1857-1860) — wars that also concerned America because of U.S. merchants’ interest in the opium trade — that stimulated China’s quest for modern knowledge from the West.<sup>13</sup> Two people, Yung Wing [Rong Hong] (1828-1912) and Anson Burlingame [Pu Anchen] (1820-1870), channeled that quest mostly to America, in spite of a much stronger British economic presence at that time and Britain’s willingness to accept Chinese students. Yung

Wing, born in Nanpingzhen near Macao, went to America to study in 1847 at the age of eighteen. He returned to China in 1854 after graduating from Yale University. While still at Yale, he concluded that “the rising generation of China should enjoy the same educational advantage that I had enjoyed; that through western education China may be regenerated.”<sup>14</sup> After his return, he tried repeatedly to find supporters of this idea. Yung Wing became the first Chinese to recognize that China was a country lacking in knowledge: it had been ignorant of the outside world, and had an unrealistic view of itself.

On the American side Anson Burlingame opened the doors of American schools to Chinese students. Burlingame, son of an eloquent Methodist prayer leader, attended University of Michigan at

### Yung Wing’s Supporters

During his lifetime Yung Wing had seen his projects disrupted and proposals rejected and he had also endured personal snubs. He was grieved by the early death of his wife. His life at old age was lonely (his children were working in China) and at times humiliating. He was asked to leave a boarding house when fellow boarders refused to share a dining table with him. After that he found his last residence at 284 Sargeant Street, Hartford; he entered his second floor quarters through a side entrance. He died of apoplexy in 1912 at the age of eighty-three while making preparations for returning to China for the fourth time; Sun Yat-sen had asked him to serve in the newly minted Republic. He was buried in section 12 of Cedar Hill Cemetery, 453 Fairfield Ave, Hartford.

However, Yung Wing also had many supporters throughout his life. In China, they were Ding Richang, who headed the Jiangnan Machinery Factory (Bureau), which Yung Wing purchased



for China from Putnam Machine Co., Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and Zeng Guofan; in America, they include Samuel Capron, the principal of Hartford Public High School, Noah Porter, Birdsey Northrop, Joseph Twichell, Joseph Hawley, Mark Twain and Ulysses Grant. An undisclosed

person(s) helped him get back to the U.S. in 1902. (In 1898 he became a fugitive in China for his participation in the failed Hundred-Day Reform. He could not return to the U.S., as Secretary of State John Sherman, citing the law that prohibited a Chinese immigrant to become a citizen, revoked his citizenship. He sought sanctuary in Hong Kong.)

In his memoir published when he was eighty-one, he spoke of the people who helped him receive his American education, the most important thing in his life. They paid his travel, provided support to his aged parents, and subsidized his tuition. “Though late in the day..., yet it may be a source of satisfaction to their descendants...to know that their sires took a prominent part in [my] education.” His benefactors include, in Hong Kong, The Morrison Education Society, The Olymphant Sons, David, Talbot and Robert (shipping merchants of New York), Andrew Shortrede, editor of *China Post*, A. A. Richtie, an American businessman, and A. A. Campbell, a Scotch businessman, and, in America, the Ladies Association of Savannah, Georgia.

In 1996 the Chinese Students Memorial Society [[www.120ChineseStudents.org](http://www.120ChineseStudents.org)] was founded in Connecticut, with the intention of memorializing the 120 students and the American host families they lived with, and Yung Wing. In 1998 Governor John G. Rowland of Connecticut recognized September 22, 1998, as Yung Wing and the Chinese Educational Commission Day in Connecticut. In 2000, Yale unveiled a portrait of Yung Wing in its Grand Hall and in the same year it established the Yung Wing Memorial Scholarship Fund for International Students. ♦

Detroit and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1846. He had been a two-term congressman from Massachusetts before he was appointed by President Lincoln in 1861 as the U.S. minister to China. Following the Second Opium War, there appeared a window of opportunity for a more open China and for more equal trade and state-to-state relation between China and the West.<sup>15</sup> Burlingame concluded that the posture of arrogance and threat of the West toward China served only the interest of those in the Qing court who opposed institutional reforms to achieve wider contact with the West. After he resigned from his ministerial post in 1867, he was asked by the Qing court to be China's ambassador-at-large, to "explain" China to the treaty powers. In America, through his effort, the two countries signed the Seward-Burlingame Treaty of 1868 (the treaty was drafted by Secretary of State William Seward). Article 7 of the treaty stated, "Chinese subjects shall enjoy all the privileges of the public educational institutions under the control of the government of the United States" and provided reciprocal privileges for American citizens.<sup>16</sup> In 1871, Viceroy Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang memorialized to emperor Tongzhi, proposing sending students to America to study:

Article 7 of the new peace treaty with America states that from now on Chinese who wish to study in [American] government-controlled schools and colleges will be treated the same as citizens from the most favored nation.... For these reasons, your ministers are seeking approval to establish a bureau in Shanghai, to recruit bright young boys from coastal provinces, at the rate of thirty per year, and a total of 120 in four years.<sup>17</sup>

Thus China launched its first-ever study-abroad project. Yung Wing was appointed the deputy commissioner of the Chinese Educational Commission. He chose Hartford, Connecticut, as the city for its headquarters. The average age of the students was twelve and a half.

The project met an extraordinary reception in America. President Andrew Johnson, a Southerner and a Democrat who succeeded Lincoln after his assassination, started a reconstruction program that was modeled after Lincoln's promise to bind up the nation's wounds, "with malice toward none, with charity for all." The impeachment proceedings against President Johnson for his conciliatory policy toward the South, although failed in the Senate, had nevertheless dissipated the punitive sentiment of Radical Republicans who wanted a more stern policy toward the vanquished Southern states. The decade that followed the ending of the Civil War in 1865 saw legislations of healing between North and South and tolerance toward minorities. In 1868 Ulysses S. Grant was elected the eighteenth president on the Republican ticket. In 1870, Congress ratified the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave all citizens the right to vote regardless of race. Two years later Congress passed the Amnesty Act, which restored civil rights to the citizens of the South. In 1875 it enacted the Civil Rights Act, which gave equal rights to African Americans in public accommodations and juror duty. The post-war Hartford was a center of trade, manufacturing, and wealth in a nation recovering from the devastations of the war. Hartford was also an intellectual center in New England. Its residents included Harriet Beecher Stowe, who had written *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1851, and Mark Twain, who had begun *Huckleberry Finn* by 1876. Nook Farm, a residential area in Lord's Hill where the Chinese Educational Commission's headquarters was situated, sheltered progressive thinkers who were

---

... "the rising generation of China should enjoy the same educational advantage that I had enjoyed; that through western education China may be regenerated."

---

—Yung Wing

influential in politics of the day. The Commission's project was supported by clergymen, politicians and intellectuals, as well as activists and policy makers in education. Among them was Joseph Hawley, publisher, opponent of American slavery, educator, general in the Civil War, governor, and senator. The call by Birdsey Northrop, secretary of the Connecticut State Board of Education, for homes to care for the first thirty

Chinese students drew responses from 122 families in Connecticut and Massachusetts, including some leading families in the community.<sup>18</sup>

The teenage students studied in schools

in the Connecticut River Valley area before entering college. They progressed swiftly in their Americanization. They changed to American clothing, took up sports and some even cut their queue, a symbol of a male's loyalty to the Manchu emperor. In the homes of their hosts, they were treated as members of the family, not boarders. They were also popular socially. William Lyon Phelps, a Yale professor, wrote about his Chinese classmates at Hartford schools of an earlier day: "They...were splendid sportsmen, alert in mind, good at their studies, good at athletics.... [In dances] their manner to the girls had a deferential elegance far beyond our possibilities....The fairest and most sought-out belles invariably gave the swains from the Orient the preference."<sup>19</sup> In 1876, the students were invited to attend the Centennial Celebration at Philadelphia, where President Grant gave them a reception and shook hands with each student. But the project, slated to continue for twenty years, lasted only nine.

The political climate began to change in the late 1870s. On the Chinese side, the new commissioner, Wu Jiashang, and his predecessor, Chen Lanbing, both traditional Chinese scholars, asked Li Hongzhang to disband the commission because they believed the students had abandoned Chinese traditions, acquired foreign (bad) habits, and learned nothing that was useful to China. Yung Wing wrote to Li in defense of the commission. In America, he tried to secure admission for several Chinese students to the military academies at West Point and Annapolis. Their military education would meet China's practical needs and bring the Qing court's support for the commission. In December 1880 Grant, urged by Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) and the Reverend Joseph Twichell of Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, both supporters of the commission and friends of Yung Wing, also wrote to Viceroy Li, advising continuance of the commission.

The project also started to lose its timeliness in America. In 1876, Rutherford Hayes was nominated as the presidential candidate of the Republican Party, thus making Grant a lame-duck president. After the completion of the trans-continental railroad, the labor market dropped precipitously and American workers revolted against Chinese mining and railroad laborers in Western states. An anti-Chinese sentiment, exploited by both Democrats and Republicans, swept the nation.<sup>20</sup> The erosion of liberal disposition toward foreigners and minorities led to the military academies' refusal of admission of the Chinese students.<sup>21</sup> The refusal was taken by Li as a violation of the Burlingame Treaty, and the

students were recalled in 1881.

American educators protested to the Chinese government about the recall. In a letter to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Yale president Noah Porter and several others wrote about educators' anguish, love, and hope:

The undersigned...exceedingly regret that these young men have been withdrawn from the country.... The studies of which they have been deprived by their removal, would have been the bright flower and the ripened fruit of the roots and stems which have been slowly reared under patient watering and tillage. We have given to them the same knowledge and culture that we give to our own children and citizens.... In view of...the injury and loss which have fallen upon the young men whom we have learned to respect and love, we would respectfully urge that the reason for this sudden decision should be reconsidered.<sup>22</sup>

At the time of the recall, only two students had graduated from Yale. Twenty others were studying at Yale, four at Columbia, seven at MIT, and five at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute; and about sixty students were in preparatory schools.<sup>23</sup> Not until twenty-eight years later, in 1909, after China's defeat by Japan in 1894 and Beijing's occupation by the Eight-Country Allied Force in 1900 (amid China's other defeats and territorial losses), did the Qing court again send students to America.<sup>24</sup>

China, after its earlier defeats by both the individual and the joint forces of Britain and France, had retained its traditional contemptuous attitude toward Japan<sup>25</sup>. The devastating defeat by Japan shocked the nation into an awareness of the need to learn from the modern world, both West and East. Because of restrictive U.S. immigration laws and the expenses involved, few Chinese students went to America. Japan, however, besides using Chinese characters as a basis for its written language and thus being easier to adjust to linguistically, was closer geographically to China and was eager to receive Chinese students. (In 1898, Yano Fumi, Japan's minister to China, wrote to Nishi Tokujiro, Japan's minister of foreign affairs, "If the Japanese-educated Chinese talents become dispersed in the old empire, it would be the best strategy for establishing Japan's power base in East Asia,...winning the trust of Japan among Chinese officials and citizens,...and expanding

Japan's influence in the mainland without limit."<sup>26</sup>) By 1906 the number of Chinese students in Japan had exceeded twelve thousand.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Boxer Indemnity's Educational Legacy**

The event that both enabled and forced China to send students again to America was the United States' decision in 1908, upon China's prodding, to remit the part of the indemnity resulting from the Boxer Rebellion that was in excess of America's incurred losses.<sup>28</sup> The indemnity had been fixed by the Boxer Protocol of 1901 which ended the occupation of Beijing begun in 1900 by the foreign powers.<sup>29</sup> The amount was 450 million taels (\$334 million, or \$724 million with accrued interest), to be paid in thirty-nine years. (The total annual income of the Qing court was around \$185 million.) The American share of the indemnity was 7.3 percent, or \$24.4 million. Russia's share was the largest, 29 percent, followed by Germany, France, Great Britain, Japan, the United States, Italy, and others. Before the negotiation among the powers on the indemnity began, Secretary of State John Hay had instructed the American delegation to submit a claim of \$25 million against China and to negotiate with the treaty powers for a combined total claim not to exceed \$150 million. Hay had inflated the American claim by a factor of two over the country's actual incurred losses, intending to use a reduction of the claim as a bargaining chip to ask that other treaty powers scale down their claims and to secure trade privileges from China. However, the bargaining with the treaty powers failed and China was left holding the debt.

The remission was preceded by two related events in U.S.-China relations: initiation of the American Open Door policy toward China in 1899-1901 and the anti-American boycott in China in 1905. William Rockhill, diplomat, linguist and China scholar, formulated the Open Door policy and the response to the boycott. Rockhill had studied Chinese in France and also become fluent in Tibetan. He served in the U.S. legations in Beijing and Korea, and resigned from diplomatic service to travel in Tibet and Mongolia before returning to the service in 1893. He was also a special assistant in the American delegation during the Beijing talks on indemnity, and was among the first to question the validity of Hay's claim.

In the 1890s each of the European powers and Japan had carved out in China its "sphere of influence." British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury defined the British sphere as an earmarked Chinese territory which, should China be broken up by the

powers, Britain would not like any other power state to have. In 1899, the year before the siege at Beijing, Hay, urged by Rockhill, initiated the Open Door policy. (Rockhill, in turn, had been urged by Alfred Hoppisley, an Englishman who had worked in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service.) Hay asked other treaty powers to adhere to a policy of equal tariff, collected by the Chinese government, on vessels of other nationalities at port cities under each power's sphere of influence. During the siege, sensing that the powers would soon divide China, Hay expanded this policy to include the preservation of China's territorial and administrative integrity. But the powers' replies were evasive, and the policy was eventually abandoned.<sup>30</sup> Rockhill was disgusted by the stance of the powers, concluded that the policy was poorly thought out, and felt pessimistic about China's ability to reform.

In 1905 Rockhill was named the U.S. minister to China. The pressing issue that awaited him upon his arrival in May was the Chinese boycott of American goods in port cities — the first ever by China of foreign goods. The boycott was a protest against the U.S. policy on Chinese immigrants, the violence against the Chinese in America, and U.S. courts' and state governments' condoning of the violence.<sup>31</sup> Rockhill met with the Chinese merchant guilds in Shanghai that organized the boycott and then warned the Chinese government that it would be held responsible for all losses incurred from disrupted trade and other causes. To the American government, he reported that beneath the boycott he sensed important changes in China for the first time: voicing of public opinion, emergence of a native press, and the budding of a patriotic spirit. (Much of this change was instigated by students who had returned from Japan.)

In both his advocacy of the Open Door policy and his response to the Chinese boycott, Rockhill was guided by a belief that an orderly society in China was necessary to American interests in that country. It was against these background events that Liang Cheng, China's minister to Washington (1903-07), prodded the American government to return a part of the Boxer indemnity.

Some thirty years earlier, in 1875, the eleven-year old Liang Cheng was a fourth (and last)-dispatch student of the Chinese Educational Commission. He was tutored to study Greek at Amherst College and attended Phillips Andover Academy. The recall of the students in 1881 by the Qing court dashed his plans of attending Yale or Amherst in another year. After returning to China (and introducing baseball to the country),

he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and served in Europe. In 1897 he was knighted in England. A year later he argued successfully in the Kaiser court that China's Prince Chun, whom he accompanied to Berlin to apologize for the killing of German subjects in Shandong, should not prostrate to Wilhelm II. (In 1792, British emissary Lord George Macartneys also skillfully succeeded in not performing the ritual prostration to Emperor Qianlong: he bent one knee, as he would have done when received by the British throne; but the kissing of the royal hand was omitted.) During his tenure in Washington, he was received warmly not only by John Hay (who was known publicly as an avowed friend of China) but also by President Theodore Roosevelt (who held the prevailing attitude of

to the justice and rights of the American people under the terms of the protocol," and "perhaps a revision of the figures could be made by which the President would be enabled to obtain a clearer sense of the justice of the request my Government had made."<sup>33</sup> By degree, he arrived at a plan for a possible reduction, and Hay agreed to recommend the plan to the president. But the fulfillment of the plan was frustrated by the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 over Russia's demands and claims on China's Manchuria and on Korea, Roosevelt's involvement in the mediation of the Russo-Japanese War, and the death of Hay.

In April 1905, shortly before Rockhill's departure for China to assume his ministerial post, Liang wrote to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Liang Cheng, the baseball player in Phillips Andover Academy (right front, the right photo, 1881), as China's minister to Washington (center, 1903), and (with his son) during an interview expressing China's gratitude to America for the remission of the Boxer indemnity (left, 1907)

contempt toward the Chinese and respect toward the Japanese). At Andover's 129th commencement exercise in 1907, he told the gathered alumni of the binding force of a three-base hit which he made in a championship baseball game twenty-six years ago: "When I assured the President that I was the same person" that made that hit in 1881 and won the contest for Andover against Phillips Exeter, "from that moment the relations between President Roosevelt and myself became ten-fold stronger and closer." Besides known as a loyal alumnus at Andover, he was made an honorary member of Amherst's class of 1885, and awarded honorary degrees by Yale and Amherst.

Liang buttressed his negotiating position by trumpeting the justice of the remission, in newspaper interviews, civic speeches, and discussions with high-level officials (amid his speeches on the injustices dealt to the Chinese in the country by the American judicial system<sup>32</sup>). He stated to Hay that "there was no possible answer in diplomacy

that the prospect of a reduction of indemnity payment to America had improved considerably. He had met Rockhill to draw up an outline of the reduction. During the meeting, however, Rockhill claimed that the president had wanted to know how the Chinese government would spend the money if it were returned. Liang answered that China would not make an advance declaration on a subject that was its internal affair. He sensed an American intention to interfere, and was fearful that the money would elude China's grasp. So he advised the ministry to have an answer to Roosevelt's question ready when Rockhill called on the ministry as America's new minister. Liang also proposed an answer and gave his reason:

It seems appropriate to declare to the American government: Please return the indemnity so that it can be used for establishing schools and sending students abroad. The American

government will be pleased to gain a reputation of being just and to bear witness to the development of talent through education,...and most of the country will welcome this lofty goal....To use for educational purposes the money that is already allocated for indemnity would create benefit from damage, and gain from loss. The act would heighten China's morale, lay a foundation for the nation's resurgence, and lift us from humiliation.<sup>34</sup>

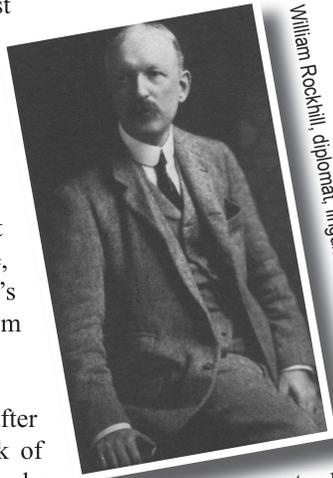
On July 12, 1905, two months after his arrival in China and at the peak of the Chinese boycott, Rockhill, after he had called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote to Roosevelt, proposing carrying out Hay's idea of returning a portion of the indemnity because

[officials] in high position all have...emphatically declared that in their opinion any amount of this indemnity return to China by the United States should be solely devoted to educational purposes. I have no doubt myself that...[they] are convinced that...education on modern lines...alone can insure them independent existence.<sup>35</sup>

Roosevelt's reply was strong on the issue of justice and ambiguous about what he intended to do.<sup>36</sup> Although the boycott was over by September 1905, he did not act on the remission in the next year and a half. A possible reason for the inaction was that Elihu Root, who succeeded Hay, wanted to postpone implementation until the United States had collected a "sufficient" amount.<sup>37</sup>

In early 1907 Liang Cheng revived his request to the president through Secretary of Interior James Garfield and Secretary of Commerce and Labor Oscar Straus, and Roosevelt agreed to act. On June 15, 1907, Root notified Liang of the planned remission. Liang commented, "This magnanimous act [the planned remission] has won the lasting gratitude of the Government and people of China." On December 3, 1907, the president asked Congress for authority to remit and cancel all claims upon China in excess of actual incurred losses. The request sailed smoothly in the Senate,

but it was reduced by \$2 million in the House.<sup>38</sup> On May 25, 1908, Congress authorized the \$12-million remission.



William Rockhill, diplomat, linguist and China scholar

But the debate and the plot and counter plot on the use of the money had begun long before Congress authorized the remission, and lasted until 1909. Both Liang Cheng and his successor, Wu Tingfang, and the Qing court resisted the interference of the American government in the use of the money. Yuan Shikai, the powerful commissioner of northern ports, wanted to use the money to build railways in Manchuria for defense against Japan and Russia, with the profit from the railway operation to be spent on education. But Rockhill thwarted all of China's diplomatic maneuvers to free the money from the educational plan. In the end Rockhill prevailed on account of the strength of his ultimatum: accept the American proposal or risk losing the money. In the final agreement, the plan was included as an attachment and made no reference to the remission; the United States did not appear coercive, nor China subjugated.

The remission won lavish public and private praise. The *New York Times* called the remission "an example [to the world for its]... principles of right and justice and highmindedness that prevail between honorable men." Sarah Conger, wife of the U.S. minister to China and a survivor of the siege at Beijing, wrote to her niece, "The attitude of the United States...to cancel the Boxer indemnity is an attitude too deep, too broad, too high for word expression.... [Its]... seed was brought over in the *Mayflower*; it was planted in the virgin soil of liberty, where it rooted, and was watered with treasured dewdrops; was nourished into being in Love's tenderness; was sustained in Truth's fortitude. This is the story of our country's attitude."<sup>39</sup> Thus China began sending students to America for the second time, with funding assured for thirty-one years. The remitted fund was also used to establish the Tsinghua School, which would supply the students to study abroad. The first dispatch, also consisted of fifty students, began their studies in America in 1909. Two years later, the Qing dynasty was toppled and the Republic of China was founded. Many Chinese students who returned from Japan participated in that revolution.

### The Republic Years since 1911

Between 1909 and 1911, the last year of the Qing's reign, three detachments totaling 179 students were sent to America.<sup>40</sup> After the founding of the Republic of China, the students supported by the remission money were selected from the Tsinghua School. Between 1912 and 1925 a total of 852 students, including forty-three women (who must have “natural feet” [*tian zu*], as opposed to bound feet), were sent to America. In 1928 the Tsinghua School became a full-curriculum university and the remission fund became available to a nationwide pool of students. Although in subsequent years the fund supported an increasingly smaller percentage of students studying in America when other avenues opened, it continued to attract the brightest students in China. One student, Qian Xuesen, was later thrust into national attention in America. Qian became a prominent rocket scientist at the California Institute of Technology in the late 1940s. During the McCarthy period he was arrested and eventually deported to China on dubious charges of being a member of a Communist cell at Caltech.<sup>41</sup>

In 1936, the year before China's War of Resistance against Japan began, 1,002 Chinese students went to America to study. During the war years, 1937-1945, the number dropped to less than a hundred per year. After 1949 the flow of students from Mainland China to America stopped completely. After the breakout of the Korean War in June 1950, the United States banned the Chinese students in the country to return to China on the grounds that their scientific and technical skills would aid the Communist regime in Mainland China. It also enticed the students to remain in America by liberally dispensing the status of permanent residence. Some students, who persisted in their demand to return to China, were imprisoned without trial or hearing. The ban was lifted in 1955, about two years after the end of the Korean War.

## Part II. Perspective

### American and Chinese Perspectives

Alexis de Tocqueville, after his travels in the nineteenth-century America, wrote how in America religion regulates the state,

In the United States religion exercises but little influence upon the laws and upon the details of public opinion; but it directs the customs of the community, and, by regulating domestic life, it regulates the state.<sup>42</sup>

In 1872 and in 1909 Americans viewed the issue of Chinese students in America from the perspective of the New Testament and the absolutism of a monotheistic religion.<sup>43</sup> Many of Yung Wing's supporters in Hartford were members of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church, and Yung Wing had as a teenager been taught in China and brought over to America by the Reverend Samuel Brown.

Anson Burlingame was known as a “magnetic” orator in his days as a congressman. Toward the end of his first major speech to convince an American audience to treat China on the basis of equality, he was no longer speaking as China's envoy, but as an American evangelist making an appeal to the evangelical spirit of his flock:

[The Mission] means commerce; it means peace; it means a unification of her [China's] own interests with the whole human race...I believe that this generous greeting [of yours] is a better exponent of the wishes of the West,...a generous spirit which... would exchange goods with China, would also exchange thoughts with China,...[a spirit which] does not believe that the Christian's hope shall cease to bloom where the Christian martyrs fell.<sup>44</sup>

To some missionaries, educating the Chinese was the least expensive and most efficient way to Christianize the Chinese: “The great mission of the Christian Church...is not to teach mechanics and civil engineering, or foreign languages or sciences;...but to Christianize them....Our boys' boarding-school and girls' boarding-school in Chekiang [Zhejiang] are among the cheapest and most efficient missionary agencies which can be employed in China.”<sup>45</sup> They also considered their work the beneficiary of gunboat commerce: “Justifiable or not, it [the Opium War] was made use of in God's providence to inaugurate a new era ... in the course of history — God accomplishing his great and wise purposes by allowing man to pursue his petty, private, and even unjustifiable ends..., [for] the opening of China for the free promulgation of his blessed Gospel.”<sup>46</sup>

To others, a Western education was considered necessary for China to become a civilized society, so that the Chinese could become patriotic, courageous, altruistic, intellectually clear-headed, and sincere, attributes of Christian individuals that they found lacking in the Chinese. In 1890, a

## Burlingame, his Mission, and the Open Door Policy



China's appointment of Burlingame as its envoy in late Qing Dynasty and his acceptance were in themselves extraordinary events in China's history of modernization. How did it happen?

In his memorial to Emperor Tongzhi seeking approval to appoint Burlingame, Prince Gong, who headed the board of governors of *Zongli Yamen* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), wrote,

The date of revising the treaties is near...[The Ministry] has not carried out its plan to send an emissary to the treaty countries because of the lack of suitable personnel...The American minister Anson Burlingame...is a man of peace...Last year he even helped China resolve difficulties and settle disputes [with foreign countries] when he was away in America. In the recent farewell dinner,...he said in the future he will work with all his effort to help settle disputes that are unfair to China, as if China had dispatched him as its envoy...Burlingame [seemed] intending to establish [himself a] name [in helping China]; his feelings are not false. Your minister has since visited him several times and on each occasion he spoke passionately. Your minister has considered that [in diplomacy] it is not essential [for a

country] to use [its] own countryman as its representative; if [the person] is honest and trustworthy, it does not matter which region he comes from...On the twenty-third day [of this month] your minister had a candid discussion with Burlingame [on dispatching him as China's envoy] and he accepted it with deep feelings...

Burlingame, in explaining the genesis of the Mission to Secretary of State Seward, described why he accepted the appointment,

When the oldest nation in the world, containing one-third of the human race, seeks, for the first time, to come into relations with the West, and requests the youngest nation, through its representative, to act as the medium of such change, the mission is not one to be solicited or rejected.

The Seward-Burlingame Treaty seemed to contain two aspects: a spirit of equality and the translation of that spirit into action. For example, Article V states that both countries recognized man's "inherent and inalienable" right of free migration and emigration. Burlingame died of pneumonia in 1870 in St. Petersburg, Russia, as China's envoy and did not live to see the day that the treaty was denounced in America. (The Qing court awarded Burlingame a posthumous civil-service title of the First Rank and a pension of \$10,000 to his family. He was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Some thirty years later, John Hay and William Rockhill initiated the Open Door policy. The policy was regarded a failure by American historians. The Open Door policy, however, was quite consistent with America's position toward China during the Seward-Burlingame period. In 1862 Burlingame wrote to Seward,

If the treaty powers could agree among themselves to the neutrality of China, and together secure order in the treaty ports, and give their moral support to that party in China in favor of order, the interest of humanity would be sub-served. ♦

decade before the siege at Beijing, Arthur Smith, dean of the American missionary educators in China and one of the few China experts of his time, summarized his diagnosis of and cure for China:

What they [the Chinese] do lack is Character and Conscience...The forces which have developed character and conscience in the Anglo-Saxon race...came with Christianity, and they grew with Christianity...What China needs is righteousness, and in order to attain it, it is absolutely necessary that she have a knowledge of God and a new conception of man, as well as of the relation of man to God...The manifold needs of China...will be met permanently, completely, only by Christian civilization.<sup>47</sup>

Smith met with Roosevelt on March 6, 1906, to advocate the remission and the American educational plan, although he considered the money was rightfully America's since it was a "*punitive* indemnity for a great criminal act" of the Chinese government against the American government. In the same year, Edwin James, the president of the University of Illinois, wrote to Roosevelt:

The nation which succeeds in educating the young Chinese of the present generation will be the nation which for a given expenditure of effort will reap the largest possible returns in moral, intellectual, and commercial influence.... The extension of such moral influence...would mean a larger return for a given outlay than could be obtained in any other manner. Trade follows moral and spiritual domination far more inevitably than it follows the flag.<sup>48</sup>

The American side also viewed the recall in 1881 as a missed opportunity for exerting its influence and wanted a second chance. In the same letter to Roosevelt on the American educational plan, James wrote, "If the United States had succeeded thirty five years ago...in turning the current of Chinese students to this country, and had succeeded in keep that current large, we should to-day be controlling the development of China in that most satisfactory and subtle of all ways, — through the intellectual and spiritual domination of its leaders."

On China's side, the cultural basis of sending students to America to study is to protect its institutionalized Confucianism. With the technical know-how of building "strong battleships and powerful cannons," China could ward off aggressions and hence encroachment on its cultural tradition of benevolence. Two millennia ago the ideal of remaining secluded securely from the invading land nomads in the Eurasian steppe led to the construction of the first segment of the Great Wall. But protecting the institutionalized Confucianism was also the reason for not sending students. In the late 1870s the commissioner of the Chinese Educational Commission and his predecessor were the most resolute opponents of the commission; they perceived that American education had eroded in the students China's cultural ideals, which they believed the students must retain. The influential viceroy Zhang Zhidong had verbalized what was in the Chinese mind the acceptable use of Western knowledge: Chinese learning was the essence, and Western learning was for practical development. The aspect of the Western learning that must be rejected was its religion. The massive study-in-Japan movement at the turn of the century had its cultural basis as well: Japan also practiced an institutionalized hierarchic human relationship and rejected Christian missionaries. In 1901 Zhang and Viceroy Liu Kunyi advised the throne to send students to Japan because

there is no school in Europe and America that does not teach Western religion concurrently, and no school in Japan that does not teach harmonious human relations concurrently.<sup>49</sup>

Western religion was seen as spearheading in the attack on Chinese learning. (Zhang succeeded in preventing the State Department from appointing an American as superintendent of the remission educational plan.)

America wanted the Chinese students to acquire its Christian culture. China wanted the students to learn America's machinery know-how. Education as a means to understand the cause of poverty in China and seek its deliverance was not a stated goal. China had felt pain and humiliation in the stranglehold of foreign powers, but it had remained ignorant of the progressive impoverishment of its people.

### **The Influence of Foreign-Educated Students in China**

What did the American education of these

students accomplish? Many of the teenage students who returned to China in 1881, in spite of the abrupt termination of their studies in America, later became outstanding achievers in engineering, industry, banking, the military, and civil services.<sup>50</sup> Only one became a revolutionary. This was also true in the twentieth century of those who were supported by the remitted Boxer Indemnity Fund. The group was noted in addition for their achievements in academia, an area for which the 1881 returnees were insufficiently trained. It was the work of the largest group of returned students — those from America — that formed the foundation of China's modernization. By comparison, many of the students who went to Japan at the turn of the century returned to China to participate in overthrowing the Qing dynasty. Many who went to France in the decade around World War I to participate in the “diligent-work, diligent-study” program became prominent Communist revolutionaries; among them were Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping.

Numerous factors contributed to these distinctions, such as the age of the students at their return and their fields of study while abroad. But the most important factor was the stability of the educational experience. The students who went to America, England, and Germany (and to the Soviet Union in 1950s) experienced structured study and few distractions. The studies of many of those who went to Japan and France, however, were frequently interrupted by lack of funds and by distractions such as upheavals back home, the tension in state relations between China and the host country, and humiliations experienced while abroad.

In Japan, on April 30, 1903, more than 130 Chinese students organized and enlisted in the Resist-Russia Righteousness Brigade and wrote to Yuan Shikai about their readiness “to abandon our studies” and die for the country. On December 4, 1905, Chinese students initiated a demonstration to object the new rules issued by Japan’s Ministry of Education governing the admission standards and conduct of Chinese and Korean students; several hundred Chinese students left Japan and returned to China as a protest. In 1920 in a parliamentary inquiry in Japan more than thirty members asked, “Those Chinese students who studied in Japan become anti-Japan after their return, and those returned from America become pro-America. What policy should the government adopt to face this phenomenon?”<sup>51</sup> In France in 1919 the Chinese delegation to the signing of the Versailles Treaty was prevented from leaving their hotel by Chinese students demonstrating against the treaty.

(The delayed final instruction from the Chinese government to its delegation was not to sign the treaty.) In the treaty, Woodrow Wilson, David Lloyd of Britain, and Georges Clemenceau of France concurred to ignore China’s contribution to the Allied force and transfer Germany’s rights in China’s Shandong province to Japan.<sup>52</sup> On September 21, 1921, about 800 Chinese students demonstrated in Paris and later occupied Lyon University, demanding subsistence payment, after China’s ambassador told them that the embassy had no funds to support them. The French government expelled them and on October 13 deported 104 students. The students could neither study diligently nor work diligently.

Becoming a revolutionary requires accepting a belief in a doctrine that promises hope in an otherwise hopeless environment. After years of serious education in an environment conducive to learning, a student quite naturally becomes a builder.<sup>53</sup> A non-conductive environment, however, becomes the fertile ground for the recruitment of revolutionaries.

The history of education in Taiwan illustrates the effect of stable education. At the end of World War II, Taiwan was somewhat more prosperous than Mainland China because of the five decades of warless development it had enjoyed as a colony of Japan. But, like Mainland China, it had a rapidly rising population and an agrarian economy. In addition, there was no systematic legislation that would encourage wealth creation through commercial and industrial expansion, and the government was under rigid, one-party control of the Nationalists (Guomindang). On February 28, 1947, two years before the full retreat of the Nationalists to the island, a protest by citizens against corruption and authoritarian rule broke out into antigovernment riots. The government reacted by arresting and executing thousands of prominent intellectuals and civilian leaders. The pattern of development and suppression evident in the February 28 incident was to be repeated forty-two years later in Tiananmen Square. These convulsions resulted from the clash between the twin legacies of China’s millennia-old civilization: the unyielding reality of poverty at home and weakness among nations, and the undying desire for prosperity and equality.

Taiwan held its first study-abroad examination in 1953 and 233 students passed. By 1975 the number had increased to 1,514; in the intervening twenty-two years a total of 23,540 students had passed (a per capita equivalent to about 50,000 students per year in the People's Republic of

China). Within some four decades following 1949, guardians of the old ideology died off one by one, the new generation was raised in an evolving new ideology, the economy changed from agrarian to commercial, and the political system from authoritarian to democratic. In 1990s about fifty percent of Cabinet ministers in Taiwan had degrees from American universities and there was always a higher proportion of American Ph.D.'s in the Taiwan Cabinet than in the American Cabinet. In Taiwan's high-tech industry, it was the engineers trained in the United States that made it a success.<sup>54</sup> The younger generation that had received a stable education at home and abroad and had grown up in an environment without blood spilling, social turmoil and war brought about a transformation from ignorance to knowledge.

We act out our roles according to the script of history, wherever, whenever, and whoever we happen to be. The script can change only after old forces are spent and new forces are born. Both the dissipation of the old and the creation of the new require an open education for the young. ♦

---

*T. K. [Tsu-Kai] Chu, before his retirement, was principal research physicist at the Plasma Physics Laboratory of Princeton University.*

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Adopted in part from the Translator's Preface of Qian Ning's *Chinese Students Encounter America* by permission of the University of Washington Press.

<sup>2</sup> *China Daily*, December 16, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *China Daily*, November 7, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> See Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990], 532-617.

<sup>5</sup> The Industrial Revolution was the result of a change in the productive potential — due to a change in the stock of knowledge — and a consequent change in organization to realize that productive potential (Douglass C. North, *Structure and Change in Economic History* [New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981], 17. These factors were absent in the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) China.

<sup>6</sup> Kang Chao, *Man and Land in Chinese History* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986], 89.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Hejdra, *The Socio-Economic Development of Rural China During the Ming*, in *The Cambridge History of China*, ed. D. Twitchett and F. W. Mote, vol. 8 [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 450.

<sup>8</sup> Chao, *Man and Land*, 60.

<sup>9</sup> Hejdra, *The Socio-Economic Development*, 437.

<sup>10</sup> The five basic human relationships in Confucian teaching are between two persons. They are ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and older friend

and younger friend. The post-1949 socio-political campaigns replaced the traditional hierarchic relationships by a single one between the Party and an individual.

<sup>11</sup> *Menzi* (The Analects of Mencius), "Liang Hui wang" (King Hui of Liang), part 2, section 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Guangxu zhengyao* (Records of the Guangxu reign) (Yonghezhen, Taibeixian, Taiwan: Wenhai Chubanshe, 1969), vol. 27 [1901]: 41.

<sup>13</sup> In the late eighteenth century, British traders, in order to find silver (the currency of global commerce) to pay for the tea they purchased from China, began to sell opium, which was planted by East India Company in India, to China. In 1839 Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu confiscated 20,000 chests of British merchant's opium without compensation. Britain reacted by sending a fleet of sixteen warships and four thousand troops to attack China's coastal cities in an undeclared war in 1840. China lost. In the resulting Treaty of Nanking, the British obtained concession from China, including the ceding of Hong Kong. (Hong Kong was returned to China in 1997).

The Second Opium War resulted from Britain's demand that the Treaty of Nanking be revised on the grounds that China had granted the rights of revision to the U. S. in the 1844 Wangxia Treaty. The Treaty of Tianjin of 1858 and the Treaty of Peking of 1860 concluded the war. China granted concessions, paid indemnity and, to Britain, ceded the Kowloon Peninsula.

Lin, while trying to stop the flow of opium into China, also began to modernize the Guangzhou (Canton) trade system and to make preparations for wider contact with the West. The Opium War thus marks the beginning of China's path toward modernization. (Hsin-pao Chang, *Commissioner Lin and the Opium War* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964], 217.)

<sup>14</sup> Yung Wing, *My Life in China and America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company 1909), 41.

<sup>15</sup> That window of opportunity was cultivated by Xu Jiyu and Wenxiang in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Robert Hart, a British Consul who later worked in China's Imperial Maritime Customs Service, and British minister to China Rutherford Alcock; and Burlingame. Xu, after witnessing the easy victory of the British fleet during the Opium War, began to study Western geography, history, and culture. He became an admirer of the kingless America and George Washington. Burlingame, during his last days as the U.S. minister, presented a copy of one of Gilbert Stuart's portraits of George Washington to Xu. In a tribute to Washington, Xu wrote, "Washington...founded a country of ten thousand *li*, but did not become an emperor or pass the country to his offspring; instead, he established laws to make the country a republic. He was the successor to the sages of Three Dynasties: in a country the best governs, the people are the most important, and the warrior spirit is not worshipped. I have seen his portrait: it shows his unequalled fortitude....The United States of America has a territory of ten thousand *li*, but it does not have princes and dukes and inherited nobilities; public affairs are placed before the public for debates and discussions, a truly unprecedented system. What a wonder!" (Xu's words were inscribed on a granite block placed at the three-hundred-foot level of the Washington Monument. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 rekindled the desire among British merchants for trade advantages in China; the British House of Commons rejected the renegotiated Treaty of Tianjin).

<sup>16</sup> Paul H. Clyde, *United States Policy Toward China: Diplomatic and Public Documents* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1940), 85.

<sup>17</sup> *Chouban yiwu shimo (Tongzhichao)* (Beginning-to-end [records] on dealings on barbarian affairs (during Tongzhi's reign)) (Taipei: Guofeng Chubanshe, 1963), 1896-97.

<sup>18</sup> Anita Marchant, *Yung Wing and the Chinese Educational Commission in Hartford*, unpublished ms. (Master of Arts diss., Trinity College, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> William Lyon Phelps, *Autobiography with Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939) 83-84.

<sup>20</sup> The slogan of the Workingmen's Party of California was "The Chinese Must Go!" (This sentiment, though not its cause, was similar to that expressed in 1900 nearly twenty years later by the Boxers in regard to foreigners in China: "Revive the Qing [dynasty]; destroy the ocean [people].") John Miller, Republican Senator of California, spoke on the Senate floor on suspending immigration of Chinese laborers in 1882, "Let us keep pure the blood which circulates through our political system... and preserve our life from the gangrene of oriental civilization." The *New York Times*, which had been critical of mob violence against the Chinese, commented on the speech being "A masterly statement... admirable in temper and judicial in fairness." In that year Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act; senators of Massachusetts and Connecticut voted against the Act. (The Act was repealed in 1943 when China and the United States were allies in World War II.)

<sup>21</sup> The State Department's answer to Yung Wing's application on behalf of the Chinese students was "There is no room provided for Chinese students" (Yung Wing, *My Life*, 207-9). No corroborative document on the refusal has been found.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-15.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Robyn, *Our Celestial Neighbors: The Chinese Mission in New England, 1872-1881*, unpublished ms. excerpted in *idem*, *Building the Bridge: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States* (Master of Phil. diss., Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1996); Tsung-loo Kao, "Zhongguo liumei youtong yu Meiguo Masheng Ligong Xueyuan" (Chinese teenage students who went to study in America and MIT), *Zhuanji wenxue* (Biographical literature), vol. 75 (Taipei: Zhuanjiwenxue Chubanshe, 1999): 29.

<sup>24</sup> In 1894, in a dispute over the Japanese seizure of the Korean royal palace, China and Japan fought a sea battle in Yellow Sea and a land battle in Seoul and Pyongyang. China lost. In the Treaty of Shimonoseki, which concluded the war, China paid indemnity, gave up treaty ports, ceded Formosa (Taiwan), the Pescadores, and the Liaodong region of southern Manchuria. (Japan returned Taiwan and Pescadores to China in 1945 after its defeat in World War II.)

<sup>25</sup> The Ming-dynasty Chinese called the Japanese pirates operating in China's coastal waters *wokou*, "bandits of diminutive stature." In Qing China's declaration of the 1894 war against Japan, Japanese were named *woren*, "people of diminutive stature." (After the war, a popular children's rhyme in Japan was, "Stupid egg! Stupid egg! Your father is a Chinaman!")

<sup>26</sup> Kawamura Kazuo, *Chusinjidai no Yano Ryukei si* [Yano Ryukei in Qing dynasty], cited in Huang Fuqing, *Qingmo liu xi xuesheng* [Chinese students studying on Japan near the end of Qing dynasty] [Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1975], 8.

<sup>27</sup> Chen Xuexun, comp., *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyu dashiji* (Record of major events in China's modern education) (Shanghai: Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1980), 163; *Xuebu zouzi qiyao* (Major memorials from the Department of Education), vol. 1. A Japanese source numbers the students at eight thousand (Tofuji Kaishu, *Chugokujin Nihon ryugakushi* [A history of Chinese students in Japan], 16, cited in Huang, *Qingmo liu xi xuesheng* [Chinese students studying on Japan near the end of Qing dynasty] [Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1975], 24).

<sup>28</sup> Michael Hunt, "The American Remission of the Boxer Indemnity: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Asian Studies* 31 (1972): 539-59.

<sup>29</sup> In the late nineteenth century, China's repeated military defeats by foreign powers led to xenophobia and to fear that it was about to be carved up by them. The Boxers United in Righteousness was formed by peasants in Shandong in response to provocations by Western missionaries and their Chinese Christian converts. In June 1900 the Boxers killed Chinese Christian converts, four French and Belgian engineers, and two English missionaries. On June 17 foreign powers seized the forts at Dagu and advanced from the port city of Tianjin to Beijing to protect the foreign embassies, businesses, shops, and residences in the Legation Quarter. When news of the loss of Dagu reached Beijing, the Boxers laid siege to the Quarter. The siege led to the invasion and occupation of Beijing in August 1900 by 20,000 foreign troops. See Peter Fleming, *The Siege at Peking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>30</sup> George Keenan, in *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951], 21-37), considered the Open Door policy a failure, because it was ill defined and thought out, it did not win clear endorsement by treaty powers, and Hay was not prepared to back up the policy with substance. Chinese historians view it more favorably. Lee Yunhan wrote, "Because of this well-known Open Door policy, the Powers temporarily adjusted their policy, and the tragedy of a carved-up China was avoided" (*Zhongguo jindaishi* [China's modern history] [Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1985], 135). Fu Qixue criticized American historians' view of Open Door policy being a failure as "biased and narrow (*pianxia*)" (*Zhongguo wajiaoshi* [China's diplomatic history] [Taipei: Sanmin Shuju, 1960], 139). In any event, it is difficult to envision how a partitioned China would have promoted America's interest in trade or eliminated conflicts among the treaty powers.

<sup>31</sup> An anti-Chinese atmosphere in America had persisted since the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. In 1888 President Grover Cleveland declared that the Chinese were "an element ignorant of our constitution and laws...and dangerous to our peace and welfare," and the Republican presidential candidate Benjamin Harrison spoke of his "duty to defend our civilization by excluding alien races whose ultimate assimilation with our people is neither possible nor desirable." (In a somewhat similar vein, in 1793, when China enjoyed an inflow of silver from Britain in exchange for teas and crafts, Emperor Qianlong had written to King George III, stating that China not only did not need Britain's manufactured goods, but also did not want its people in its soil: "...as to your request to send someone from your country to live in the Celestial Empire to manage your trade, [it is] not congruent with the system of the Celestial Empire; [it] absolutely cannot be permitted." In 1816 Lord Amherst, the British envoy who sought again to station diplomats in Peking, was asked to leave China after Amherst refused to prostrate. Emperor Jiaqing instructed the governments of coastal

provinces: "From now on expel any English barbarian ships that approach [our] ports: do not permit [the ships] to dock; do not allow even one person to land.")

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Smith, *China and America Today* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1907), 165.

<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, June 23, 1907.

<sup>34</sup> *Qinghua Daxue shiliao bianxuan* (Edited and selected source materials on the history of Tsinghua University), vol. 1 (Beijing: Qinghua Daxue Chubanshe, 1991), 76-77.

<sup>35</sup> "Rockhill Papers," Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>36</sup> Roosevelt replied, "I intend to do the Chinese justice and am taking a far stiffer tone with my own people than any President has ever yet taken, both about immigration, about this indemnity, and so forth...." "Rockhill Papers," Houghton Library, Harvard University.

<sup>37</sup> Lo Xianglin, *Liang Cheng di chushi Meiguo 1903-1907* [Liang Cheng: Chinese Minister in Washington, 1903-1907] [Hong Kong: Institute of Chinese Culture, 1977], 150.

<sup>38</sup> Representative Edwin Denby of Michigan, who had worked for the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service between 1887 and 1894, stated that the Chinese "have absolutely no standing in this matter, except that we desire to show them that our civilization means justice as well as battle ships. But it's better to be just and even generous to our own people whose markets and establishments were ruined in China before we begin to be generous to a foreign power." (A year earlier, in April 1906, Denby and Liang clashed when the House was debating on issues related to the Exclusion Act. Denby charged that Chinese officials [in China] were selling immigration certificates, and Liang wrote to the House, stating that Denby's story was fictitious. Denby rebutted and charged that Liang had violated generally expected diplomatic behavior of not commenting publicly on issues being discussed in Congress.)

<sup>39</sup> Sarah Conger, *Letters from China* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1909), 373.

<sup>40</sup> Because of the toppling of the Qing government in 1911, a fourth detachment of eleven students, made up of preparatory students who had passed the examination in 1910, was unable to make the trip until 1914 (Hu Guangbiao, *Zhongguo xiandaihua de licheng* [China's modernization odyssey] [Taipei: Zhuanji Wenxue Chubanshe, 1981], 78).

<sup>41</sup> See Iris Chang, *Thread of the Silkworm* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, The Henry Reeve Text, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), vol. 1, 304.

<sup>43</sup> A different kind of Christianity is portrayed in *Nag Hammadi Library* (James M. Robinson, dir. of translation board [New York: Harper & Row, 1977]), a collection of thirteen ancient codices. According to the Secret Gospel of Thomas, redemption can be achieved through the divinity that is within oneself, while in the Gospel of John of the New Testament, it is achieved by following Jesus. (Elaine Pagels, *Beyond Belief: the Secret Gospel of Thomas* [New York: Random House, 2003] 30-73.) Divinity within the self is a central idea in Buddhism (ibid., 74); its corresponding part in Confucian ethic is the ethical self.

In the Congressional debate on excluding Chinese, religion was also used to support exclusion. In 1882 Senator Montgomery Blair of Maryland wrote to Senator Miller, "I have read your speech on the

Chinese question with great satisfaction....Providence has committed this continent to our trust to be used for His honor and glory by making it the home of civilization, and we should be derelict to our highest duty if we...allowed the country to be overflowed by mere machine men, utterly destitute of all sense of honor, patriotism, or religion, and absolutely incapable of being impressed with such feelings."

<sup>44</sup> Frederick Williams, *Anson Burlingame* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912], 121-22. (Britain's China experts also advocated the supreme importance of evangelism. A correspondent of the *London Times* in Peking for more than two decades wrote, "Their [the Chinese] objections to the Western religion, whether well or ill-founded, can in no wise be allowed, for Christianity will not be denied entrance, no matter what obstacles be opposed to it....We really stand in the presence of one of those grand cosmic conjunctures which shape human destinies. It is one half of the world which is challenging the other half; all Christendom gathering its strength to subdue all Paganism....With all reasonable qualifications, Christendom is probably not too arrogant in claiming for itself preeminence among the families of men." Alexander Michie, *China and Christianity* [Boston: Knight and Millet, 1900], 163-181. Michie was also a critic of the Burlingame Mission and the Burlingame Treaty.)

<sup>45</sup> John Nevius, *China and the Chinese* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1882) 354-61.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 301-02.

<sup>47</sup> Arthur H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1894 [orig. pub., Shanghai, 1890]), 316-30. Smith's conclusion was influenced by his observation of opium addiction, foot binding in women, female infanticide in poor families, concubinage, in addition to polytheism, pantheism, and atheism, which he found repugnant to his Christian beliefs: "The most melancholy characteristic of the Chinese mind [is] its ready acceptance of a body without a soul, of a soul without a spirit, of a spirit without a life, of a cosmos without a cause, a Universe without a God" (ibid., 313). (Both Christianity and Confucianism espouse the love of others, but they differ in how human comprehension of that ideal is achieved. In monotheistic Christianity, the ideal emanates from the Bible, and its teachings are absolutistic since they are God's words. In humanistic Confucianism, the ideal emanates from human considerateness [*ren, shu*] of other people, and the Confucian concepts of *tian* [heaven, nature, universe, cosmic order] are human constructs, learned through human experience of nature's ways. Monotheism and humanism are polar opposites in their concept of the human-religion relationship. In monotheism, human live for the glory of God; in humanism, religion is constructed for the well-being of human.) Smith also regarded Confucianism as the cause of China's social ills, but he did not seem to have considered the effect of centuries of poverty. He considered the frugal living habits of coolies who carried sedan chairs for Westerners "irrational."

<sup>48</sup> Smith, *China and America Today*, 213-16, 213-16.

<sup>49</sup> *Guangxu zhengyao* vol. 27 (1901): 20.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas E. LaFargue, *China's First Hundred: Educational Mission Students in the United States* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1942).

<sup>51</sup> Tofuji Kaishu, *Chugokujin Nihon ryugakushi* [A history of Chinese students in Japan], 98, cited in Wang Qisheng, *Zhongguo liuxuesheng* (Continued on page 26)

contributed to China's efforts to Westernize, and his sending some 100 teenagers to study in America was an epochal event, not only because many of them later had prominent careers in China, but also because this project set a precedent for institutionalizing sending Chinese students to study abroad. As described above, the first Chinese student at Harvard came from one of Yung Wing's groups.

In spite of the temporary setback by conservatives after 1881, some individuals studied at Americans schools at their own expense, for example, the celebrated Soong sisters, while others were sponsored by churches. With the painful lesson learned from the Boxer Incident, the Qing government was forced to admit the necessity of learning from the West and to place sending students abroad on its agenda. The increase in Chinese students at Harvard after 1906 was a result of this decision.

In the history of Chinese studying abroad, the Boxer Indemnity can be interpreted as a blessing in disguise and also as a pivotal point in the history of relations between China and the United States. In 1901, the Boxer Indemnity was agreed upon to 67.5 million British pounds, or 450 million taels. China was required to complete the payments to the 8 invading powers plus Austria in 39 years, by 1940. The indemnity that China was supposed to pay to the U.S. was 32,939,055 taels, at an annual interest of 7.3% (*The Rise of Modern China*, p. 401)

In the winter of 1906, Dr. Arthur H. Smith, who had been in China for decades as a missionary, suggested to President Teddy Roosevelt that part of the Boxer Indemnity allocated to the U. S. should be returned to China to be used for bringing Chinese students to American colleges and universities.

In 1908, the American Congress passed an act authorizing President Roosevelt to return the unused indemnity, about US \$12,000,000, to China over the period from 1909 to 1940, according to

a schedule worked out by both sides. To prepare Chinese students to study in the U. S., the Tsing Hua School was established in Peking. The Tsing Hua School later became Tsinghua University, known as the "MIT of China". These measures launched a new wave of Chinese students going to America and brought forth many outstanding leaders in many fields, whose names appear throughout modern Chinese history. And of course, this significantly increased the number of Chinese students at Harvard, the history of which belongs to another essay. ♦

---

*Dr. Bernadette Yu-ning Li is Professor of Chinese Studies, St. John's University. She is also the President of the Society for the Study of Chinese with an American Education; the President of the Society for Chinese American Studies; the President of the New York Chapter, Overseas Chinese Association; and the President of Outer Sky Press.*



---

*(Continued from page 21)*

*de lishi guiji* (Historical tracks of Chinese students studying abroad) (Hubei, China: Hubei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1992), 111.

<sup>52</sup> In World War I about 2,500 Chinese laborers died in France and the Mediterranean Sea while performing non-combat work. See Spence, *The Search*, 288-94.

<sup>53</sup> It would be incorrect to conclude that the majority of Chinese students who studied in America were accomplished builders or scholars. Between 1854 and 1954, about forty to fifty per cent of the students failed to complete their bachelor studies (Y. C. Wang, *Chinese Intellectuals and the West, 1872-1949* [Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966], 111-14, 168-87). In *Weicheng* (Eng. trans., Jean Kelley and Nathan K. Mao, *Fortress Besieged* [Bloomingtondale:

Indiana University Press, 1979]), Qian Zhongshu sculptured the charlatan character of a group of returned students. (Qian, supported by the remission fund of the Boxer Indemnity by the British government, studied at Oxford in 1935, and later at the University of Paris. Today he enjoys a literary reputation in China perhaps unsurpassed by any other twentieth-century writer for his five-volume *Guanzhuibian* (selected trans. by Ronald Egan in *Limited Views: Essays on Ideas and Letters* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998], in which he analyzes topics from China's historical writings and compares them with corresponding Western ideas and writings; topics include literature, anthropology, sociology.)

<sup>54</sup> *New York Times*, July 19, 1994.